

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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For Immediate Release

October 20, 2004

Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on October 5, 2004, **JAMES JEROME WILLIAMS**, a/k/a “JJ,” and “Fat Man,” age 27, and **TYRONE L. MERRIWEATHER**, a/k/a “Bone,” and “B,” age 26, both of Tamms, Illinois, were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury sitting in Benton, Illinois, in a three-count indictment, charging them with conspiracy to distribute more than 5 grams of crack cocaine. In addition to the conspiracy charge, WILLIAMS is charged with possession with intent to distribute more than 5 grams of crack cocaine and MERRIWEATHER is charged with unlawful possession of a firearm by a felon. The violations took place between January 2004, and August 16, 2004, in Jackson County. An indictment is a formal charge against a defendant. Under the law, a defendant is presumed to be innocent of a charge until proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to the satisfaction of a jury.

The crack cocaine charges carry a penalty of between 5-40 years’ imprisonment, a fine of up to \$2 million, and a term of at least 4 years’ supervised release. The firearm charge carries a penalty of not more than 10 years’ imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of 3 years’ supervised release. WILLIAMS and MERRIWEATHER are being held without bond pending their December 20, 2004, jury trial.

Information for the indictment was obtained through the cooperative effort of the Carbondale Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, Southern Illinois Enforcement Group, and Drug Enforcement Administration, pursuant to those agencies’ participation in the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative in the Southern District of Illinois. Under the Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative, federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors are working together to prosecute drug dealers, felons in possession of firearms, and criminals that use firearms to commit violent offenses or drug trafficking offenses. The Jackson County Project Safe Neighborhoods Initiative is a joint and cooperative effort of the United States Attorney’s Office, Jackson County States Attorney’s Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, Carbondale Police Department, Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, Southern Illinois Enforcement Group, and Murphysboro Police Department.

The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Amanda A. Robertson for prosecution.